

FOOD STAMP PROGRAM

The Food Stamp Program is a federal program designed to help low income families supplement their purchasing power for groceries. Non food items and alcohol products can not be purchased with food stamps.

Families must meet the income and resource limits in order to be eligible to receive food stamps. All countable income is based on the gross income an individual receives. Standard work related deductions, shelter cost and, if eligible, medical deductions are some of the deductions that may be subtracted from the gross countable income. Receipts are required for these deductions. Non-relatives who live together in the same home may meet the eligibility requirement to apply separately. Children living in the home with their parents must be age 22 in order to be considered for eligibility as a separate food stamp unit.

An individual's resources are considered in the eligibility process. This may include bank accounts, excess value of vehicles, trust funds, promissory notes (if negotiable), and certificates of deposits. Each reserve item will be evaluated to determine if it is a countable reserve item.

Food stamp allotment is based on the number of individuals being included in the food stamp unit and the countable net monthly income. Certification periods vary based on individual circumstances, but are not to exceed twelve months.

Purpose of the Food Stamp Program

The Food Stamp Program is designed to promote the general welfare and to safeguard the health and well being of the nation's population by raising the levels of nutrition among low-income households. The cost for Food Stamps is funded 100% by the Federal government. Administration costs are shared 50/50 by Montgomery County and the US Department of Agriculture.

Applying for Food Stamps

Anyone may apply for food stamps: eligibility criteria will be discussed during the interview process. Applications for Food Stamps are taken Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Department of Social Services, 102 E. Spring Street, Troy, NC 27371. If you are disabled or elderly you may call our office at 910-576-6531 for a telephone interview or appointment.

The information needed to determine eligibility is:

- Identification such as valid driver's license or ID card
- Social Security Cards for all members of household included in Food Stamp Program
- Verification of all income for members of household included in Food Stamp Program
- Verification of Rent or Mortgage Expenses
- Verification of Utility Expenses (electric bill, water bill, telephone bill, etc.)
- Information regarding all resources (bank accounts, 401-K, vehicles, burial plots, etc.)
- Proof of medical expenses for household members receiving Social Security Disability or age 60 and older

Additional information may be needed and will be discussed during the interview.

Determining Eligibility

The three main areas of eligibility are household size, resources and household income. Once the caseworker has determined that the household meets each of these eligibility factors, the

shelter and utility expenses will be considered. Other deductions that **may** be allowed are childcare expenses, legally ordered child support payments and medical deductions.

Food Stamps – Emergency Assistance

All applicants are screened for emergency benefits during the interview process. An emergency is determined by assessing the household's situation for the entire month the application was submitted. If the household is determined in need of emergency benefits they will receive their initial benefit amount within 7 days. If a household is determined ineligible for emergency benefits they will receive their benefits within 30 days of the date of application.

How Food Stamp Benefits Are Received

Paper stamps or food coupons are no longer issued in North Carolina. In March 1999, Montgomery County began using Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) Cards to issue benefits to eligible households. Once a household has been determined eligible, they will receive an EBT card through the mail, only one card is issued per family. The card then needs to be activated at the Montgomery County Food Stamp department. The household may then purchase food at any authorized grocery store. Once a purchase has been made the amount of the purchase is automatically deducted from their account and the remaining balance is shown on the bottom of their receipt. The monthly benefits are added to the account on the same day each month.